

Voices from Papua



**Brothers and sisters, dear friends,
Tonight we will watch the film *Pig Feast*.**

It is a film that has made many people concerned. Many feel disappointed. Many are even angry.
But it has also made many people say:
“Yes, this is the reality.”

For me, however, this film is not only about Papua.

It is about people.

It is about humanity.

It is about what it truly means to live out the values of Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution.

It is about land.

About forests.

About homes.

About ordinary people who are too often left out when big decisions are made about their lives.

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I want to share a short story.

In the second week of August 2024, news appeared about 2,000 excavators arriving in Ilwayab District, Merauke.

I then looked for information about the district.

The population is around 3,800 people.

Just imagine that.

One morning, people wake up and suddenly see thousands of heavy machines arriving on their land.

Suddenly, thousands of strangers enter their territory.

Heavy equipment operators.

Project workers.

People they do not know.

All of them arrive at once.

Without real conversation.

Without proper explanation.

Without giving the community time to prepare mentally.

We must honestly admit:

that would deeply shake their lives.

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For many people in the cities, land may only be numbers on a map.
But for Indigenous Papuans, land is like a mother.
Their ancestors are buried there.
Their sago groves are there.
Their rivers, where they find food, are there.
Their family stories are there.
Their identity is there.
When land is lost, it is not only the economy that disappears.
Part of their life disappears too.

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In truth, this threat is not new.
It has existed for almost a hundred years.
In the 1950s, the Dutch government created the Kumbe Rice Project.
Later, during the eras of President Sukarno and President Soeharto, large waves of transmigration entered Merauke. These programs were sponsored by the state and financed with foreign loans.
By the end of the 2000s, there were already 65 transmigration settlement units built in the old Merauke region, with 24,897 households and 97,617 people. It is no surprise that today the migrant population in Merauke greatly exceeds the Indigenous population.
Then came MIRE.
Then MIFEE.
And now a national strategic food project on an even larger scale.
From the colonial era until today, Southern Papua has continued to be treated as “empty land” that can be used to meet the needs of the state and the needs of others.
But that land was never empty.
People live there.
Traditional landowners live there.
Indigenous communities have lived there long before this republic was born.
That is why I believe we must not close our eyes.

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But I also believe we must not lose hope.
There is still a way to improve the situation.
There is still a chance to choose wisdom.
We must push ourselves to create policies that protect human lives — lives created by God.

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First, the state must restore respect for Indigenous communities:
the Malind Anim people, the Auwyu people, the Muyu people, the Kimaam people, and many other Papuan tribes.
Indonesia’s Constitution is already clear.
Article 18B of the Constitution states that the state recognizes and respects Indigenous peoples and their traditional rights.
This means Indigenous Papuans must never become strangers on their own land.
Second, the government and investors must sit down and speak with the people.
Come with respect.
Come with sincerity.
Come not only with heavy equipment, but also with a willingness to listen.

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If there has been damage, acknowledge it.

If there is pain, listen to it.

If people's rights have been taken, restore them fairly.

They are all Indonesian citizens who deserve the same treatment as every other citizen under our Constitution.

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And there is a solution that is actually very reasonable.

Not taking Indigenous land forever.

But fairly and respectfully leasing Indigenous land.

This principle is already recognized in Indonesian law, most recently in Government Regulation No. 106 of 2021, derived from Law No. 2 of 2021, the second amendment to Papua's Special Autonomy Law.

For example:

If 500,000 hectares of customary land are used, and the community receives rent of Rp300,000 per hectare per year — an amount that is actually very small for the state and investors — then Indigenous communities would receive Rp150 billion every year.

If this continued for 30 years, the total would reach around Rp4.5 trillion.

Imagine if that money were managed as a permanent Indigenous community fund.

Starting in the 31st year, the investment returns alone could generate hundreds of billions of rupiah every year.

Indigenous communities could independently decide how to use the money.

Because it is their money

It could pay for Papuan children to go to school.

For scholarships for doctors and engineers.

For hospitals.

For business training.

For building their own future.

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This means development does not have to destroy Indigenous communities.

Development can be done fairly.

With respect.

By involving communities as landowners, not as victims.

Development must never mean the disappearance of people.

Progress must never be built on the fear of ordinary citizens.

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Friends,

Tonight we are watching a film.

But in truth, we are also looking into a mirror.

We are asking ourselves:

What kind of Indonesia do we want to build?

An Indonesia that is strong because it respects ordinary people?

Or an Indonesia that becomes great on top of the suffering of those who have no voice?

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I hope that after watching this film, we will not only feel anger.
But also learn to become more human.
More willing to listen.
More courageous in defending justice.
And wiser in the way we see Papua.
Because the future of Papua is not only the concern of Papuans.
It is a test of Indonesia's conscience.

Thank you.

The Westpapua-Network expresses its gratitude to the author for allowing us to publish this voice from Papua.



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July 2026